DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 454 992 PS 029 624

AUTHOR	Barry, Virginia M., Ed.; Cantor, Patricia, Ed.
TITLE	Focus on Infants & Toddlers (Ages 0-3): A Quarterly Newsletter for the Education Community, 1999-2000.
INSTITUTION	Association for Childhood Education International, Olney, MD.
PUB DATE	2000-00-00
NOTE	34p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Association for Childhood Education International, 17904 Georgia Avenue, Suite 215, Olney, MD 20832.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022)
JOURNAL CIT	Focus on Infants and Toddlers; v12 n1-4 Fall 1999-Sum 2000
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Brain; Caregiver Child Relationship; Caregiver Role; *Child Caregivers; Child Development; *Child Rearing; Childhood Needs; Disabilities; Early Intervention; Family Relationship; Games; Hazardous Materials; Inclusive Schools; *Infant Care; Infants; Language Acquisition; Nutrition; Partnerships in Education; *Play; Preschool Education; Toddlers

ABSTRACT

These four quarterly newsletter issues address various topics of interest to child caregivers. Each issue focuses on a theme and includes articles on that theme, along with regular news or vice president's columns. The Fall 1999 issue addresses family play and seeks to encourage families to regard play as a way of relaxing and finding contentment together. The issue includes articles on family fun with young children with disabilities and on family games. The Winter 1999 issue celebrates infant/toddler teachers, and its articles discuss the implications of new brain research for such teachers, preparing infant/toddler teachers for inclusion of children with disabilities, and the pioneering work of Harriet Johnson. The Spring 2000 issue's theme is young children's brain growth and development. The issue's articles discuss infant nutrition and brain development, language and the developing brain, and eliminating hazards to brain development in children's environments. The Summer 2000 issue focuses on the art of caring for young children, with an article on the benefits of establishing partnerships between child care providers and early intervention specialists, and another discussing crucial factors in working with young children, such as self-awareness and working with parents. (EV)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 454 992

Focus on Infants & Toddlers (Ages 0-3) A Quarterly Newsletter for the Education Community

1999-2000

edited by
Virginia M. Barry and
Patricia Cantor

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
A.W. Bauer
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
2B

PS 029 624

 BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ACEI

Fall 1999 • Vol. 12, No. 1

Focus on Infants & Toddlers

ages 0-3

A Quarterly Newsletter for the Education Community

Theme

For today's harried parents, finding time to play with their children may seem like just one more thing to try to fit into an impossibly busy day. As Margaret Sampson notes in her article in this issue, "Many parents have come to think in terms of the things they need to do *for* their children, or *to* their children, rather than *with* their children." In this issue, we hope to encourage families to regard play as a way of relaxing and finding contentment together. Recently, the American Academy of Pediatrics issued a recommendation that parents not allow children under the age of 2 to watch television. This recommendation came in response to a trend of children watching television at younger and younger ages. Family play, with its wealth of interactions, offers a mutually satisfying alternative to the passivity of television viewing. As Virginia Barry and Eileen Kelly point out in their articles, family play has wonderful benefits for all areas of children's growth and development.

For young children, one of the most valuable benefits of family

continued on page 5 . . .

Family Play

Virginia M. Barry, Plymouth State College, University System of New Hampshire

Parents often ask infant and toddler caregivers about activities they can do with their very young child. Child care providers generally respond with a list of developmentally appropriate activities that involve one-to-one interactions between parent and child. Given the young child's developmental needs, many suggestions involve individual language and social interactions. Typically, providers encourage parents to play with their infants and toddlers during routine times, such as feeding, dressing, diapering, grocery shopping, and while driving. Parents also appreciate caregivers' suggestions about age-appropriate children's literature, stories, and songs. Child care providers can help parents realize that just about any time can be playtime with a very young child.

ED 429624

We can also help parents to recognize that playtime is critical to early development and that it has a profound effect throughout a child's life. The infant learns very early that things happen for a reason; there are causes and effects, and the infant can be a part of these causes. Young children experience the cause and effect relationship through play. Very young children learn quickly that play is meaningful and fun. Likewise, adults involved in play with very young children experience a sense of playfulness. Playfulness has emotional and social benefits for all of us, and adds to our general sense of well-being.

Offering infants and toddlers the opportunity to play with family members can enhance family dynamics by strengthening communication, and by helping each member to develop an appreciation for the others.

Family Play

Child care providers can help parents develop different perspectives about play with an infant and toddler by talking about the notion of family play. Family play refers to those activities that involve all members of the family in just having fun, completing projects together, or doing routine tasks in the home. Family play is another way to encourage parents and other family members to interact with the very young child. Offering infants and toddlers the opportunity to play with family members can enhance family dynamics by strengthening communication, and by helping each member to develop an appreciation for the others. Family play enriches a child's understanding of family traditions and relationships.

Resources for Family Play

Internet Sites for Parents and Families

Family Fun Magazine	http://www.familyfun.com
Crayola Family Play	http://www.familyplay.com
Parents Talk	http://www.parents-talk.com
The Family Fun Network	http://www.ffn.org
The F.U.N. Place	http://www.thefunplace.com
Black Families	http://www.blackfamilies.com

Internet Resources for Parents and Professionals

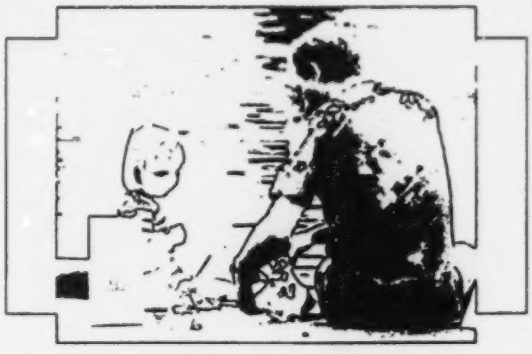
The Family Education Network	http://www.familyeducation.com/home
Parenting Guide	http://home.miningco.com/home/parenting
Parent Soup	http://www.parentsoup.com
Idea Box	http://www.theideabox.com
Parent Time	http://www.pathfinder.com/ParentTime/homepage

Other Resources

Free publications for parents, including the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education	http://www.ed.gov/pubs/parents

Infants and toddlers enjoy all kinds of activities and respond differently to each member of the family. Family play helps to give a clear message to the very young child that he or she is important. In today's busy world, families can benefit from planned family play experiences that include all members of the family, whenever possible.

Child care providers might suggest to parents some different ways to involve infants and toddlers in family activities. Parents often wait until a very young child is napping before starting a project, for example. They may not realize that infants and toddlers are good observers and are very interested in the things that families do. An infant might be content to sit in a safety seat and just watch the family activity going on. All the family members can take turns talking with the infant. A toddler might be assigned a simple chore with a buddy family member. An older brother or sister can show the child the steps in the task and encourage the toddler to practice each step. The point is to involve the infant or toddler. As a result, all family members experience a new level of interaction, and the experience enhances the younger child's sense of self-esteem. Following a planned activity, the family can talk about the event, laughing and enjoying the feeling of being together. The family might keep a journal, take photos, or videotape the activity. This recorded event can then be revisited during the child's preschool years. Preschoolers love to see and hear about events from their infancy and toddlerhood.



One basic principle should govern the notion of family play: Involve each member of the family in the very young child's life. Involving all family members helps to create a positive climate in the home environment, increasing the likelihood that the young child will grow and learn through each person caring for him or her. There are all kinds of families in our society, and each family member has value in the life of a developing infant or toddler.

It is important to remind parents that no matter the size or makeup of the family, setting aside time for family play is crucial. Infants and toddlers learn so much just from being with their loved ones and seeing human interactions—talking, laughing, smiling, thinking, observing, and planning. From a very early age, children can experience the feeling of satisfaction that comes from being a part of a family that plays together. No matter the stage of development, every family member will enjoy the benefits of family play. If we consciously set aside time for family play, spontaneous family play will eventually become a part of daily life.

Some activities that work with very young children include taking walks together, and playing simple games at meal times or other times of the day. Infants like to watch activities, even if all the other family members are busy with some job. Young children learn from a range of levels of involvement, from a hectic breakfast time to a quiet evening. Young children enjoy being with people! Everyday routines—washing the car, watering plants, caring for the garden, tearing lettuce for a salad, even mixing ingredients for a cake that the family will enjoy later for a dessert—can become part of family play if undertaken in a playful spirit.

Whatever the event, the important part of family play is just being together. It is not always possible to have all members of the family present, but it is important to make the effort. Child care providers can help parents recognize that infants and toddlers have a great deal to contribute to family life. While some activities are simpler to accomplish without a young child present, we need to help families understand that daily interactions through family play contribute to all aspects of a child's growth and development.

Family Fun With Young Children With Disabilities

Margaret Sampson, Family Initiatives Coordinator,
Just Kids Early Childhood Learning Center, Middle Island, New York

Life is full of challenges, and raising children in today's complex world qualifies as one of life's most formidable ventures. We live in a society that holds very strong opinions about the roles and responsibilities of parents, and the media subtly and powerfully reinforces those messages. Many parents are stretched to the limit in their attempts to balance the competing needs of children, home, and work, while at the same time maintaining their own sense of personal equilibrium. This becomes even more complicated for parents of children with special needs; they must also find ways to readjust and counterbalance the comprehensive demands placed on them as they try to obtain help for their children.

As a way of compensating, many parents have come to think in terms of the things they need to do *for* their children, or *to* their children, rather than *with* their children. How sad! When the idea of playing with your children is not part of a routine of family fun and relaxation, but rather a task that must be performed to achieve functional outcomes or to reinforce therapy goals, then it is time to rethink the context of how we offer help to families of young children with disabilities.

All families should be encouraged to have fun on a regular basis as a way of promoting family resilience, normalizing family functioning, reducing family stress, and enhancing parent-child interactions. Often, families of young children with disabilities do not know how to incorporate their child with special needs into established routines, or how to include them in fun activities. Professionals in the early childhood field should ask family members, "What kinds of things does your family like to do for fun?" and "Has this become a problem for your family?" These two simple questions can validate the importance of fun and help shape family expectations for what early intervention can accomplish.

Several years ago, I was contacted by a parent who mentioned how angry her two older children were that they would not be going to the beach again that summer. I asked her for more information, and she explained that she had always taken her children to the public beach during the summer. It was her family's summer vacation, and something that they all loved to do. However, since the birth of her son, who was now 2 years old and had significant disabilities, she did not know how she could manage his needs at the beach, and so the family had stopped going. When I mentioned that this could be the focus of early intervention services, she seemed very surprised. She felt guilty about "bothering" the early intervention team members with something that was not targeted exclusively to meeting her son's needs. After some encouragement, she brought it up at a team meeting, where she encountered both support and opposition. Ultimately, with a lot of work, creativity, and ingenuity on the part of all team members, this family was once again able to spend their summer having fun at the beach.

Although they may not realize it, the accomplishments of the team will have lifelong consequences for this child and his family. By listening to the parent and validating her priorities, team members enhanced the child's competence to participate in a family fun activity. But what they also achieved, by supporting this family's ability to have fun together, was to help this child become a member of his family, the most powerful outcome of all.

Family Play: What's in a Game?

Eileen A. Kelly, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics,
Children's Medical Center,
Stony Brook University Hospital, Stony Brook, New York

As a pediatrician, I learn a great deal about my young patients' development from stories of family play. During the child's first years, a very important role of mine is to monitor social, motor, and language development, in addition to physical well-being. A family that plays regularly with their infants and toddlers is less likely to have a child with subtle delays, and they are much more likely to note subtle delays, if present. Listening to stories of shared family activities exposes me to a wealth of information about the child's social and physical development.

In those precious first two years, babies are constantly taking in new information and developing life-long verbal and motor skills. Any interactive play between baby and parent is likely to improve these skills, as well as enhancing parent-child bonding and family unity. Parents stimulate children's self-esteem simply by paying attention. Activities in this age group include reading, helping the baby to exercise, and talking, talking, talking. Rolling a ball, playing patty-cake and peek-a-boo, and

. . . continued from page 1

play is knowing that parents and other family members are interested in spending time with them.

For many infants and toddlers, having someone respond to their sense of time is an increasingly rare gift. When my own life as a working parent gets hectic, I try to remind myself of a lesson I learned years ago from my son. When he was nine months old, he was fascinated with the pull cord that turned on a light in his bedroom. One day I decided to let him pull it as many times as he wanted. One hundred and sixty-seven pulls later, he finally seemed satisfied (at least for the time being). The experience made me realize how seldom he was given opportunities to take as much time as he needed to explore, experiment, and play. Although his father and I frequently played peek-a-boo and other baby games with him, it was always the adults who got bored first and ended the game, long before he was ready to stop. I have tried since then, although not always as successfully as I would like, to be aware that a child's timetable is different from an adult's. Playtime can be one part of the day that allows the child to set the pace, and that encourages family members to savor the present moment.

— P.C.

experimenting together with a variety of noises and textures are all part of the shared fun that helps a baby develop both a sense of self and a sense of his or her place in the family. Much of the play in this age group can easily include older siblings: drawing and scribbling on the same piece of paper; reading out loud for the whole family at bedtime; and supervised play with balls, rattles, and texture blocks. Teens, who can easily come to regard caring for a young sibling as a chore, can use family playtime simply to enjoy their infant and toddler siblings.

During their preschool years, children are constantly finding role models. They will emulate virtually all aspects of their model's personality in their continuing search for self. Family play can use this trait to its fullest potential. As children grow, schedules inevitably become more hectic. Teaching right from wrong can become a battle of wills. In regularly bringing the family together for playtime, the family's morals and values are shared in a less formal and decidedly more fun way.

Play during the preschool period expands to include stricter rules and setting limits. Seeing one's parents and siblings play by the rules builds a foundation for dealing with wins and losses throughout life. By playing with the family, the children learn lifelong social skills, including managing emotions, from pride and delight to anger and frustration, in socially acceptable ways. During this time, parents enjoy the further evolution of the child's personality and have an early opportunity to encourage the good traits and to refine the less desirable ones.

From educational board games to ball games on a local field, family play is an excellent way to promote healthful habits on many levels. In addition to the social and family bonding issues, physical play with the family encourages fitness, balance, and fine and gross motor skills, and it initiates a lifelong habit of exercise. As children grow, game time becomes a valuable chance for priceless small talk that keeps parents and their children in touch.

Family play is a wonderful thing; it affords immeasurable gains for parents and their children. What better way to build memories, hone verbal, motor, and social skills, and have fun, all at the same time?

ACEI News

news of a global effort to establish international guidelines for early childhood education and care

On July 4-8, 1999, 75 delegates from 17 countries met at the Gottlieb Duttweiler Institute in Ruschlikon, Switzerland, to attend the International Symposium on Early Childhood Education and Care for the 21st Century. The symposium, sponsored by ACEI and OMEP (World Organization for Early Childhood Education), was developed over a period of three years, with meetings conducted at ACEI conferences in Minneapolis, Portland, and Tampa, and at OMEP conferences in Mexico City and Copenhagen. Leah Adams and Ulla Grob-Menges co-chaired the symposium for OMEP, and I chaired for ACEI. ACEI was represented by 31 delegates and recorders. Delegates also represented OMEP and other early childhood organizations with international interests.

The Gottlieb Duttweiler Institute, near Zurich, provided a beautiful setting and institute staff went out of their way to make the symposium a success. Delegates arrived each morning by bus and enjoyed luncheons in the Institute dining room.

Symposium delegates were inspired by presentations the first afternoon by Dr. Blanca Hermosilla of Chile, Dr. Peter Moss of England, and Dr. Bettye Caldwell. On the second and third days, delegates met in seven working groups to develop international guidelines. Each group had eight or nine delegates representing different countries and continents. The working groups developed guidelines for the following topics:

- Overall philosophy, goals, and policies
- Environment and physical space
- Curriculum content and pedagogy
- Teachers and staff
- Young children with special needs
- Accountability, supervision, and management
- Parent involvement

Although many delegates met for the first time on the opening day of the symposium, individuals in working groups quickly established strong relationships. Each working group had a leader and recorder to document their work as it progressed. Dialogue on the needs and intent of the topic engaged each group as they deliberated on how they would proceed and as they discussed the possible content of their guidelines. Rough drafts were produced by the end of the second day for input from the members of the other working groups. Drafts were posted in the main auditorium for individual delegates' perusal, who were invited to provide written comments.

On the third morning, Wednesday, it was back to work to revise and complete the guidelines in the working groups, using the input from other delegates. By the middle of the afternoon, final drafts for each topic were copied for delegates to review.

After all of their hard work, delegates and recorders were ready for a dinner cruise on Lake Zurich Wednesday evening. As the boat made a leisurely trip around the lake, participants had the opportunity to table-hop and wander about on the deck to chat with old and new friends.

During the final general session, working groups met to develop brief reports on issues not yet resolved and to make suggestions for the final document. Group leaders reported at the general session. ACEI President Shirley Raines and OMEP President Audrey Curtis also addressed the group.

The symposium ended, but the work continues. Editing the guidelines, which will be published cooperatively by OMEP and ACEI, is in progress, and plans for publication are being discussed. Hopefully, the guidelines' publication in English will soon be followed by publication in other languages. Presentations about the symposium and guidelines will be made at the organizations' conferences. The major challenge for the organizations represented will be to disseminate and advocate for the document's global adoption. Participants left the symposium with the feeling that significant work had been accomplished, but major efforts will have to continue if the global guidelines are to have a significant influence on the education and care of young children.

—Sue Wortham, ACEI Chair, International Symposium on Early Childhood Education and Care for the 21st Century

Call for Manuscripts

The readership of *Focus on Infants & Toddlers* is encouraged to submit ideas and manuscripts related to the care, education, development, and learning of infants and toddlers and their families. Editorial assistance is available if needed.

If you have any materials or suggestions to be considered, please contact the new Editors:

Virginia Barry
Patricia Cantor
Department of Education
Plymouth State College
Plymouth, NH 03264

Focus on Infants & Toddlers
Fall 1999, Vol. 12, No. 1

Executive Board
Shirley Raines, *President;* James L. Hoot, *Past President;* Eeva Hujala, *Vice President: Infancy/Early Childhood;* Maria "M.J." Savaiano, *Vice President: Middle Childhood;* Debora Basler Wisneski, *Secretary-Treasurer;* Karen C. Y. Liu, *Member-at-Large;* Julie Leahy, *Student Representative;* Gerald C. Odland, *Ex Officio Member*

Editors
Virginia M. Barry
and
Patricia Cantor
Plymouth State College
Plymouth, New Hampshire

Production Editor
Deborah Jordan Kravitz

Headquarters Staff
Gerald C. Odland, *Executive Director*
Anne Watson Bauer, *Editor/Director of Publications*
Marilyn Gardner, *Director of Membership and Marketing*
Haochien Chen, *Accountant*

Copyright © 1999
Association for Childhood Education International
Olney, MD 20832

Association for Childhood Education International
17904 Georgia Ave., Ste. 215
Olney, Maryland 20832

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
SILVER SPRING, MD
PERMIT NO. 5395

ACEI

Winter 1999 • Vol. 12, No. 2

Focus on Infants & Toddlers

ages 0-3

A Quarterly Newsletter for the Education Community

Theme

This issue celebrates those who nurture and educate very young children. Infant/toddler teachers have struggled for years to achieve higher status and greater recognition. They are often the most overworked, underpaid, and underappreciated of all teachers. This may be changing, however. Recently, infant/toddler caregivers have become the focus of increased recognition because of brain research that supports the importance of early experiences. The implications of this research for infant/toddler teachers is the focus of an article by Charlotte Madison, a former infant/toddler teacher and current Director of the Child Development Laboratory at the University of Connecticut. Lanier Hart DeGrella, who supervises and trains teachers for inclusive infant/toddler programs, focuses on preparing infant/toddler teachers to work with children with special needs, their families, and the professionals who provide services for them. A third article discusses the work of Harriet Johnson, a pioneer in the field of infant/toddler education. These articles share a common theme: the importance of training for infant/toddler caregivers. High-quality programs are the work of knowledgeable caregivers, who are able to create the responsive environments and trusting relationships that young children need.

—V.B. and P.C

In Celebration of Infant/Toddler Teachers

Charlotte Madison, Executive Director,
Child Development Laboratory,
University of Connecticut School of Family Studies

Teachers of infants and toddlers have long struggled for professional recognition. Even among early childhood teachers, those teachers working with the youngest of our population often have been considered the least important in the profession. Fortunately, this image is rapidly changing. Over the past five years, reports chronicling research on the brain point to the first three years of a child's life as being the most critical window of opportunity for learning. Technologies such as Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) and Positron Emission Tomography (PET scans) have allowed researchers to observe the brain in great detail and enable them to accurately record and measure activity levels of various parts of the brain. At birth, a baby's brain contains all the nerve cells it will ever have, but the pattern of wiring between

ED 429 624

them has not been stabilized. We now know that sensory experiences drive neural activity, which changes the physical structure of the brain. If a baby is deprived of a stimulating environment, the child's brain suffers. Research has found that children who have limited play experiences or who are rarely touched develop brains that are 20 to 30 percent smaller than normal for their age. This research has changed some of our fundamental assumptions about how children grow and develop. The nature vs. nurture argument is no longer relevant. We know now that it is the interplay between nature and nurture that determines a child's development.

Research has found that children who have limited play experiences or who are rarely touched develop brains that are 20 to 30 percent smaller than normal for their age.

This knowledge has profound implications for our current definition of education in this country. Until recently, little attention was given to infant/toddler programs. They were generally considered to be a form of baby-sitting, and only minimal qualifications were considered necessary for those who worked in these programs. We now know that this was an incorrect assumption. Those who work in high-quality infant/toddler programs must be highly trained, professional teachers. It is time to redefine education and to recognize that high-quality early care and education is essential for the healthy growth and development of our children.

Infant/toddler teachers have complex responsibilities. First and foremost, they must have a solid understanding of infants' and toddlers' developmental needs. The child's emotional security and emerging independence and autonomy are dependent upon the teacher's knowledge of these important developmental issues. Infant/toddler teachers must be able to assess the child's development through focused observation and systematic documentation, and to use this knowledge to plan meaningful curriculum for the children in

Worth a Look . . .

Caregivers who are preparing for inclusion may be interested in reading A Comprehensive Guide for Caregivers in Day-Care Settings: Training Child Care Workers and Parents To Reduce the At-Risk Factors in Infants and Young Children *(1999), by Nettie Becker with Paul Becker. Nettie Becker draws on her years of experience working with infants and young children to offer practical suggestions for early childhood teachers. The book reiterates the vital importance of well-trained teachers and high-quality environments for children with special needs and children at risk, including specific guidelines for working with children with emotional and behavioral issues, children with autism, and children with physical and language disabilities. Numerous examples reinforce the message that appropriate intervention can do much to remediate risk factors in the lives of young children. The book is available for $35.95 (paperback) from Charles C. Thomas Publisher, 2600 S. First Street, Springfield, IL 62794.*

their care. Most important, they must be able to develop sensitive, warm, and responsive relationships with each child. They must be able to read the child's cues and respond appropriately.

We now have scientific evidence for what parents and caregivers have long known. Babies thrive when they receive consistent, warm, and responsive care. This care not only meets the child's needs for nutrition, sleep, and physical comfort, but also provides for the child's emotional, social, physical, and cognitive development. Infants and toddlers learn in the context of supportive relationships, and so they need to form secure attachments to those who care for them. Infant/toddler teachers can provide this secure attachment and the stimulating environment necessary for learning.

Developing trusting relationships with parents is another equally important responsibility for infant/toddler teachers. Quality infant/toddler programs become extensions of the family. Parents and teachers form partnerships and work in tandem to support the child's growth and development. Infant/toddler teachers are important resources for parents and can help them to understand their children's growth and development. Infant/toddler teachers also can compensate for, and help children overcome, deficits that may exist in the home environment.

What we have learned from recent research on the brain is that high-quality early care and education programs for infants and toddlers should not be regarded only as a luxury or fringe benefit for some working parents. High-quality care and early education programs are essential for the healthy growth and development of all children. This knowledge has profound implications for teachers of infants and toddlers. As a society, we can no longer afford to have these teachers be the least trained and the least valued among educators.

For Further Reading:

Meisels, S. J., & Fenichel, E. (Eds.). (1996). *New visions for the developmental assessment of infants and young children*. Washington, DC: Zero to Three.

Nash, J. M. (1997). Fertile minds. *Time*, 48-56.

Shore, R. (1997). *Rethinking the brain*. New York: Families and Work Institute.

Preparing Teachers for Inclusion

Lanier Hart DeGrella, Director,
Kids Crossing Child Care Services,
Easter Seals/Crossroads,
Indianapolis, Indiana

As I introduce the idea of inclusion to child care providers from a variety of settings, I hear many caregivers express their concerns about not being "prepared" to include children with disabilities in their programs. Their doubts usually center on two things: their lack of knowledge concerning disabilities, and their concern that the child with disabilities will need a disproportionate amount of their time and attention. Consequently, I have spoken with other caregivers involved with children with disabilities about what they think is needed to prepare for inclusion. Parents and special education professionals, including therapists and teachers, all seem to agree on similar requirements, which I have consolidated into four criteria: an open mind, sensitivity, support, and knowledge of child development.

An Open Mind

This requirement involves having a positive attitude about inclusion. Whether or not a caregiver can truly be prepared for inclusion may be debatable; however, my experience suggests that both receiving training about inclusion and having experiences with persons with disabilities can make a difference. Parents of children with special needs who are willing to share their stories can have a powerful influence on caregivers' attitudes. Opportunities to observe or participate in an inclusive setting—or, more simply, a caregiver's own personal experience with a family member with a disability—also can open minds. Another aspect of open-mindedness involves the caregiver's

continued on page 4 . . .

. . . continued from page 3

willingness to learn new information and skills. Before they can successfully include a child with a disability, many caregivers need reassurance that they don't need to know *everything* about that disability. For the caregiver who is unsure of herself as a learner, it is important to offer opportunities to learn new skills in a variety of ways. For example, learning one-on-one from a child's speech therapist about how to communicate with a toddler (using a few signs and picture symbols, for example) often provides the caregiver with confidence to learn even more about language development.

Sensitivity

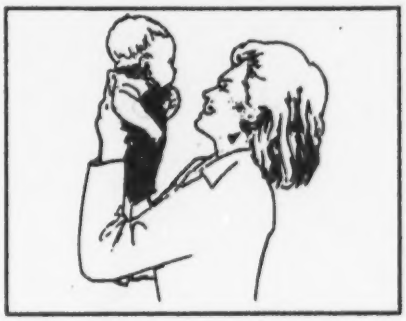
This requirement involves the caregiver's ability to listen, empathize, and respond to individual children's cues. This is not an exclusive requirement of caregivers of children with special needs. All infant/toddler caregivers must build relationships with children so that they can provide the kind of responsive care that is so critical to the social and emotional needs of our youngest children. There are many examples of excellent training in this area that are currently available; one in particular is the WestEd Program for Infant/Toddler Caregivers.

Support

This may not seem to fit in with the other requirements for preparing caregivers for inclusion, because it involves providing the caregiver with the support she needs to be successful. Consider, however, the caregiver who has been working in the field for 20-plus years, and who has, for support, an occupational therapist in her 20s. The only thing they may have in common is this young child. Preparing the caregiver for collaborating with therapists, special education teachers, and parents does raise issues. Caregivers can benefit from a basic understanding of how special services are provided in their state, how to connect with the resources that are available, what their role is in the early intervention system, and what they can expect from their administrator in terms of support.

Knowledge of Child Development

More than 20 years ago, I was a home-based



teacher of young children with multiple disabilities. Having received formal training as a special education teacher, I thought I was well-prepared for the job. As I worked with these children, I became aware of how little I actually understood about child development. I also was acutely aware of how important this knowledge was to my work. A firm grasp of child development, both principles and milestones, is the foundation upon which we must build all child care programs. It provides the framework for individualizing the curriculum for each child in our care.

Summary

In summary, preparation is important for caregivers thinking about including, or beginning to include, infants and toddlers with disabilities in their programs. This is especially true for caregivers who have expressed concern about their competence in this area. If the caregiver is sensitive, has an open mind, receives support, and has knowledge of child development, inclusion is likely to be successful. One of our parents explained that caregivers must remember that what parents of children with special needs want from their caregivers is not that much different from what all parents want and need. This echoes the sentiment of other parents who have expressed their need for caregivers to see their child with a disability as a child first.

Correction

The Summer 1999 Focus on Infants and Toddlers *newsletter included a review of* Dear Parent: Caring for Infants with Respect, *by Magda Gerber (edited by Joan Weaver). The review carried the wrong address for the publisher. The correct address is Resources for Infant Educarers (RIE), 1550 Murray Circle, Los Angeles, CA 90026. Our apologies for any inconvenience this may have caused.*

Harriet Johnson:
A Pioneer in Infant/Toddler Care

Patricia Cantor, Associate Professor, Plymouth State College

The widespread need for infant/toddler programs is a relatively new phenomenon. What many of today's infant/toddler teachers do not realize is that one of the first early childhood programs in this country to focus on the care and education of the very young child was established over 80 years ago. It was the brainchild of Harriet Johnson (1867-1934), a friend and colleague of such early childhood luminaries as Lucy Sprague Mitchell and Caroline Pratt, and a co-founder of the Bureau of Educational Experiments in New York City (which eventually became the Bank Street College of Education). In 1919, the Bureau of Educational Experiments agreed to sponsor Johnson's plan for a nursery school for children, ages 14 months to 3 years.

At the time that Johnson established her school for children under 3, nursery schools had not yet taken hold in America, although Margaret Macmillan had begun her work in England by then. Unlike Macmillan's nursery schools, which were intended primarily to provide relief for the working poor, Johnson's nursery school focused on the educational needs of the children themselves. In her 1928 book *Children in the Nursery School*, written eight years after the nursery school had been established, Johnson described the program in detail. For a group of eight children, there were three full-time teachers, including Johnson herself, plus a part-time teacher to prepare and serve meals. At least two teachers were with the children at all times. Johnson also noted: "The parents are called upon for a good deal of cooperation, and we try to avoid those who are manifestly using us as a parking place and whose real interest we are unlikely to enlist." Tuition was 50 dollars a month, but children who were considered desirable candidates were accepted even if their parents could not pay the full amount.

Children were expected to arrive some time around nine o'clock. They played freely throughout the day, with fixed times only for morning snack, outdoor play, music, lunch, and a nap. Self-initiated activity was the desired goal. The teachers provided materials, observed children closely, and intervened when necessary. Johnson emphasized the importance of teachers establishing relationships with the children that were "personal, intimate, and attentive," while at the same time working toward making the children more independent.

Johnson's approach toward the physical care of the children illustrates her ideas about the teacher-child relationship. In other early childhood programs of the day, such as kindergartens, young girls were hired to take care of the physical needs of the children—to change their clothing, assist them with toileting, put them to bed, and give them their meals. Johnson commented that it was understandable in situations where there were large numbers of children for physical care to be the responsibility of someone other than the teacher. In her nursery school, however, teachers provided the physical care. Johnson believed that "all these processes are of the utmost educational value and that how [the child] learns during them is quite as definite and essential a part of our program as the development of his language or his skill in handling the swings or wagons." Furthermore, by having the teachers administer to the children's physical needs rather than turning them over to the care of a maid, children

would receive consistent and competent care from the people who knew them well.

Johnson was aware of the difference in the relationships a child had with her teachers and her parents: "The sort of sensitiveness that parent and child have for each other is not, thank God, present in the teacher-child relationship.... A whole gamut of feelings that may overwhelm a parent only remotely concerns the teacher." She regarded teachers as more "philosophical and detached" than parents, which to a great extent made their job easier. The nursery school teachers kept parents informed through detailed records of their child's daily activities. They maintained daily charts of the children's appetite, general behavior, sleep, urination, defecation, crying attacks, and physical condition, and sent carbon copies of these home to parents. Teachers wrote daily diary notes, which were summarized at the end of the week into a typed report, along with verbatim records of the children's language. Johnson used these data to help prepare detailed case studies of the children and to plan a responsive learning environment for them.

Johnson was sensitive to concerns that sending a child to school at such a young age might be detrimental to the parent-child relationship. She argued that home and school offered different, but equally valuable, experiences for the child:

> Family relationships, acquaintance with domestic processes ... and the sense of special belonging are all desirable experiences which belong essentially to the family and with which life in the nursery school does not interfere. We are not proposing to substitute the nursery school for the home, but to supplement the home environment by one in which the baby is not the center of attention, where he has the companionship of his peers in age and where his opportunities for play are as seriously considered as work opportunities for the adult in office or home. (Johnson, 1928, p. 98)

We are not proposing to substitute the nursery school for the home, but to supplement the home environment by one in which the baby is not the center of attention, where he has the companionship of his peers in age and where his opportunities for play are as seriously considered as work opportunities for the adult in office or home.

Under Johnson's skillful direction, from 1919 until her death in 1934, the nursery school was considered one of the Bureau's greatest successes. In 1930, Johnson's nursery school was expanded to include over 60 children, and the age range was extended to 6. That same year, the Bureau of Educational Experiments moved to larger quarters and began to grow in a new direction, with the establishment of a cooperative training school for teachers that eventually became the Bank Street College of Education. The nursery school originally established by Johnson continued to serve as a model early childhood program for generations of early childhood teachers in training. Today's infant/toddler teachers can learn more about Johnson's work in her two books about the nursery school, *Children in The Nursery School* (1928) and *School Begins at Two: A Book for Teachers and Parents* (1936). Readers may be surprised to find that over 60 years ago, Johnson faced many of the same issues and concerns that infant/toddler caregivers deal with today.

international cooperation

In the Finnish education community, the international issues are gaining more interest every day. As a member of the European Union, Finland has close connections with other European countries. We are also a part of the global education society, and we are concerned with what is happening to the world's children. We are ready to work for children and to make a better world. Our goal also is to improve our own work with Finnish children.

There are two main issues that are currently of interest to Finnish teachers. First, there is the question of resources and the cancellation of our government-guided, highly regulated, and centralized education system. The second issue is the development of a quality assessment system. A new political trend of privatization is behind the reduction of government-supported schools. This trend has been influenced by free enterprise systems (e.g., from the U.S.). In practice, this has meant fewer resources for schools. Teachers are afraid of the effects of this privatization. Will the trend lead to unequal opportunities for schools, teaching, and children in general, or will it bring new opportunities to improve quality in the schools? In order to evaluate the development of the education system, a quality assessment system has been created. Yet, teachers are worried about whether the quality assessment system will lead to ranking the schools, or whether it will give teachers tools for self-assessment, reflection, and improvement.

Due to this strong developmental process in the education system, teachers have many questions, and they are motivated to find answers. Therefore, teachers would like to cooperate beyond the national level; they feel the need for international reflection. Teachers want to hear how educators from other countries cope when resources are cut and how they implement and experience quality assessment. Will quality assessment be a threat or a strength?

In Finland, as well as in other counties, there are many national organizations that allow colleagues to meet and discuss education issues. ACEI differs from these organizations because of its international emphasis. This aspect should be strengthened, and thus the different responsibilities between national and international organizations could be clarified.

Today seems to be a time of gradual change. Young teachers view the world as full of opportunities. They have a strong orientation toward international issues and cross-cultural cooperation and they are more skillful in international interaction. They speak many languages, and many of them have been studying abroad. Thus, they see international cooperation as an opportunity to give something to other cultures while gaining a better understanding of their own culture.

As a Vice President of ACEI, I see the Association most of all as an international organization. It gives our members an excellent opportunity to build networks among teachers on an international level. But what are the concrete expectations for international cooperation, and what are the members' opinions about how this international organization differs from other organizations? We have clear goals for ACEI, but can we implement the goals together on an international level? I welcome your thoughts.

—Eeva Hujala,
Vice President Representing
Infancy/Early Childhood

Call for Manuscripts

The readership of *Focus on Infants & Toddlers* is encouraged to submit ideas and manuscripts related to the care, education, development, and learning of infants and toddlers and their families. Editorial assistance is available if needed.

If you have any materials or suggestions to be considered, please contact the new Editors:

Virginia Barry
Patricia Cantor
Department of Education
Plymouth State College
Plymouth, NH 03264

Focus on Infants & Toddlers
Winter 1999, Vol. 12, No. 2

Executive Board
Shirley Raines, *President*; James L. Hoot, *Past President*; Eeva Hujala, *Vice President: Infancy/Early Childhood*; Maria "M.J." Savaiano, *Vice President: Middle Childhood*; Debora Basler Wisneski, *Secretary-Treasurer*; Karen C. Y. Liu, *Member-at-Large*; Julie Leahy, *Student Representative*; Gerald C. Odland, *Ex Officio Member*

Editors
Virginia M. Barry
and
Patricia Cantor
Plymouth State College
Plymouth, New Hampshire

Production Editor
Deborah Jordan Kravitz

Headquarters Staff
Gerald C. Odland, *Executive Director*
Anne Watson Bauer, *Editor/Director of Publications*
Marilyn Gardner, *Director of Membership/Marketing*
Patricia A. Monkres, *Director of Conferences*
Haochien Chen, *Accountant*

Copyright © 1999
Association for Childhood Education International
Olney, MD 20832

Association for Childhood Education International
17904 Georgia Ave., Ste. 215
Olney, Maryland 20832

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
SILVER SPRING, MD
PERMIT NO. 5395

ACEI

Spring 2000 • Vol. 12, No. 3

Focus on Infants & Toddlers

ages 0-3

A Quarterly Newsletter for the Education Community

Theme

Brain research has been much in the news and popular media recently. For early childhood professionals and for parents, it can be difficult to sort through all the information to decide what it actually means in terms of the care and education of young children. Should we be playing Mozart in the infant room to boost babies' brain power? Do certain aromas really trigger more connections among the nerve cells in the brain? How should we talk to infants and toddlers to encourage brain development?

This past fall, we had the opportunity to attend a three-day conference on "Learning and the Brain." The fascinating presentations from leading neuroscientists and the interesting discussions among conference participants helped reinforce for us the realization that one of the best ways to promote brain development in infants and toddlers is through responsive care from loving parents and caregivers. Research on the brain validates our prior conclusions that brain growth and development is nurtured by careful attention to all aspects of the child's development—physical, social, emotional, and of course, cognitive. The articles in this issue focus on some of the many ways to

continued on page 2 . . .

Infant Nutrition and Brain Development

Lori LaVelle-Jardin, RN, MSN, PNP,
Just Kids Diagnostic and Treatment Center,
Middle Island, New York

A large portion of the health supervision visit during infancy and early childhood consists of providing guidance and teaching for parents. Parents can use this time to ask their health care provider questions related to a variety of topics: safety, normal childhood development, and nutrition and feeding. New parents, as well as those with more experience, always have questions about feeding. They realize that as babies grow, their nutritional demands change.

Health supervision visits are a good time to educate parents about the importance of providing proper nutrition for their babies and children. When discussing the baby's development, I try to tie in the importance of both nutrition and interaction during meals. Parents appear accustomed to having their child's weight and length measured, but I often wonder

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

how many parents know why we measure the baby's head, as well. This is a good time to start talking about nutrition and brain development. Before babies begin to eat solids, the discussion should include the psychosocial aspects of eating, including why babies should be held during feedings, and when infants can begin sitting in high chairs at the family dinner table. All of these aspects of feeding affect childhood development.

In the past, we often heard that "a fat baby is a healthy baby." This idea was common to many cultures and ethnic groups. In recent years, the trend has shifted, and we are seeing an increased number of parents worrying about feeding their children too much. I hear the question, "Is my baby too fat?" more and more often.

In recent years, the trend has shifted, and we are seeing an increased number of parents worrying about feeding their children too much.

Newborn infants require 100 to 120 kcal/kg per day for adequate growth, which is supplied through breast milk or commercially prepared infant formulas. As infants grow, the amount of breast milk or formula they need increases. They can start eating some solids when they reach four to six months.

The recent emphasis on low-fat and no-fat foods has led many people to believe that such foods are good for children as well as adults. Dietary fat is important to all age groups, however, and especially important for the newborn, infant, and young child. Until children are 3 years old, they need a higher level of fat in their diets for optimal brain and nerve cell development. Until they reach their first birthday, infants should drink breast milk or commercially prepared infant formula. After that, an important item in the young child's diet—and a good source of dietary fat—is whole milk. Too many parents have told me during a baby's 12-month visit that their child is drinking 1% or 2% milk. Some families are also in the habit of using "light bread," "no-fat cheese," and other popular low-fat alternatives. These foods are fine for older, school-age children, but not for children under age 3.

So while we do not endorse the old belief that a fat baby means a healthy baby, health care professionals and child care providers need to educate parents about serving the right foods in the right amounts to help their children normally grow and develop.

. . . *continued from page 1*

enhance young children's brain growth and development.

Caregivers and parents seeking to learn more about how the brain works and the best ways to promote brain development will find helpful information in the books listed below. These are only a few of the many informative and interesting resources about brain development that are now available.

Caine, R. N., & Caine, G. (1994). *Making connections: Teaching and the human brain.* Menlo Park, CA: Addison-Wesley.

Diamond, M., & Hopson, J. (1998). *Magic trees of the mind: How to nurture your child's intelligence, creativity, and healthy emotions from birth through adolescence.* New York: Dutton.

Gopnik, A., Meltzoff, A. N., & Kuhl, P. K. (1999). *The scientist in the crib: Minds, brains, and how children learn.* New York: Morrow.

Jensen, E. (1997). *Teaching with the brain in mind.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

— V.B. and P.C.

Language and the Developing Brain

Margaret L. LaMorelle, Just Kids Diagnostic and Treatment Center, Middle Island, New York

Research and theory on language and the developing brain tend to focus on three areas: localization, innateness, and domain specificity (Bates, 1999; Robinson, 1981). The research supports several interesting (although debatable) conclusions, as follows:

- linguistic knowledge is not innate, nor is it localized in the infant brain
- the infant brain is specialized at birth and has specific areas designated for processing information necessary for language
- processing tendencies that result in a relatively invariant brain plan are innate and localized, but not specific to language
- the developing brain is highly plastic, permitting other plans for language to develop if the standard plan does not.

Why is this information important for parents and practitioners? There is no doubt that the first three years of life are a critical time of brain growth, but how can we stimulate and maximize the hidden intellect for language? Stimulating the developing brain's potential for language does not mean that parents, practitioners, and caregivers have to resort to high technology, specialized lessons, or extraordinary trips. Most of us use many language development techniques throughout the course of the day without even knowing it. From the time a baby is born, all five senses help build the connections that contribute to language development. Recent research in brain development has shown that windows of opportunity exist when the brain is especially receptive to information. As parents, caregivers, and professionals, we can maximize children's true potential for language learning in numerous ways, during simple daily activities.

At birth, the newborn's brain is only a quarter of the size of an adult's and it contains about 100 billion brain cells (Bales, 1998a, 1998b; Bower, 1998). Many brain cell connections will not be used during early development. By age 3, more connections have been made than the child will ever use. As the child develops, the more frequently used connections are retained. The ones that are not used die out, giving the more frequently used connections more space in which to grow. These connections are critical for learning and memory.

At birth, vision is one of the newborn's primary sources of information, but the least mature of the senses. During the first six months of life, the area of the brain that sends and receives visual information will continue to develop until the infant's vision is as clear as that of an adult. Appropriate stimulation provides the infant with opportunities to look at things in his or her world. Infants are particularly interested in your smiling face. Face-to-face contact provides the groundwork for later verbal conversations you will have with the child (Manolson, 1992). Infants can see you best if you hold them about 9 to 12 inches from your face. At about two months of age, infants like to look at your face, particularly if you move your mouth and widen your eyes. Here again you are preparing the child for participating in verbal conversations as you conduct nonverbal, visual turn-taking exchanges. Between 3 and 12 months, brain synapses (or connections) attain maximum density in areas that control vision, and infants can distinguish

There is no doubt that the first three years of life are a critical time of brain growth, but how can we stimulate and maximize the hidden intellect for language?

colors and track movement.

Although newborns can hear a variety of sounds, they are particularly attuned to the sound of human speech, especially their mothers' speech. Talking softly and singing to the baby are wonderful ways to prepare him or her for understanding and speaking a language. During these interactions, keep in mind that infants are listening to the pitch, sound, and rhythm of your voice. Talking to the baby about what is going on in the world facilitates language development. By responding to the baby's coos and cries, you are teaching the child that he or she is important and worthy of a response. Respond to the baby's sounds as if he or she were telling you something, and reply as if the infant could respond (Manolson, 1992). This give-and-take is the basis of later verbal conversations (Snow, 1972). By the time the baby is 3 months old, he or she can discriminate among several hundred different sounds, many more than are used in a native language. This step signals the beginning development of auditory processing skills, which allow the baby to comprehend spoken language. When you talk to the baby during daily diapering and feeding routines, you are helping his or her brain to develop the connections needed to fine-tune hearing and to comprehend language. While interacting with the baby, use available common objects, such as toys or cups, that you can talk about and that the baby can eventually handle and explore. As you get to know the child, you will discover his or her likes and dislikes.

By 8 to 12 months, neurons in the hippocampus, the seat of memory, have developed to the point where babies are able to remember events that have happened a few minutes earlier. At 18 months, the toddler demonstrates a longer attention span, as well as the ability to plan and carry out a sequence of actions. It is at about this age that the toddler achieves the cognitive milestone of object permanence (Muma, 1986; Piaget, 1952), a thinking skill that permits a toddler to know that something exists even if the object is no longer present. This leap in cognitive development is due to the combination of experience and of new synaptic connections being formed in the brain, particularly in the developing prefrontal cortex. The prefrontal cortex coordinates events in time and space, and plays a role in problem-solving, creativity, and self-awareness development.

The linguistic input you provide during infants' and toddlers' day-to-day routines, as well as during special activities, plays a key role in language and communication development. You can vary the sounds, word meaning, word order, and the words themselves in order to stimulate the child's language development. Although you may be doing all the talking, the repetition helps the child to learn to comprehend speech. In doing so, you will strengthen and reinforce the language connections in the brain.

Some basic strategies can help expose children to language. These do not involve high tech equipment, specialized training, or lessons. Through the use of modeling, prompting, and shaping, you can help infants to comprehend language and strengthen the brain connections they need to learn language.

1. Talk to the child. Use exaggerated voice patterns when you call attention to objects. Capture and hold the baby's attention by speaking in a high-er voice (Snow, 1984), by using your

face, and by varying your choice of words. Most parents and caregivers tend to talk in the "here and now," because they know most toddlers remember only the most recent past and do not anticipate the future (Ninio & Bruner, 1978). Play the "naming game" by calling the child's attention to a common object and asking, "What's that?" Tell the child the object's name. In doing so, you will confirm the child's response, even if it is merely glancing at the object.

2. ***Repeat, repeat, repeat.*** Practice helps make perfect. Parents and caregivers typically repeat a message when babies do not understand or complete a request (Messer, 1980). Most parents and caregivers naturally repeat and provide a simpler message that the child will understand.

3. ***Read aloud.*** Sharing a book with a child sets the ground work for future literacy development. The "naming game" also can be played with objects in picture book illustrations.

4. ***Be a model for the baby.*** You can talk your way through a process, providing a child with wonderful opportunities to imitate sounds, words, or sentences. The child is more likely to imitate you if you are repeating or expanding on his or her prior utterance (Folger & Chapman, 1978). Repeating what the baby or toddler has just said confirms that you have heard him or her and that you wish to continue the exchange.

5. ***Build upon the child's language.*** Typically, when parents or caregivers imitate what the child says, they are not only repeating the message, but also correcting and expanding upon the child's utterance. Frequently, the child will then imitate the expanded language model. It has been shown that children learn language faster when their mothers consistently expand and extend their utterances (Cross, 1978).

6. ***Ask the child questions.*** Parents and caregivers often ask questions of children who are as young as 3 months old—expecting, of course, to provide their own answers (Snow, 1978). Your tone of voice, or intonation pattern, is the primary cue that children under 2 years of age use to discriminate questions from statements.

It is very important to keep in mind that while brain development follows a standard progress, every brain is unique. Each child will build connections to deal with his or her own experiences in a highly individualized manner. The kind of care and stimulation you provide will make a difference in the child's brain development and power. As you talk to and read to young children, remember that you are helping them develop the neural networks that are important for language learning. The effects of your daily chats and little conversations with infants and toddlers will last a lifetime.

References and Resources

Bales, D. (1998a). *Building baby's brain: Learning language.* Athens, GA: University of Georgia.

Bales, D. (1998b). *Building baby's brain: What parents can do.* Athens, GA: University of Georgia.

Bates, E. (1999). Language and the infant brain. *Journal of Communication Disorders, 4,* 195-205.

Bloom, L., & Lahey, M. (1978). *Language development and language disorders.* New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Bower, D. (1998). *Building baby's brain: What child care can do.* Athens, GA: University of Georgia.

Cross, T. (1978). Mothers' speech and its association with rate of linguistic development in young children. In N. Waterson & C. L. Snow (Eds.), *The development of communication.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Folger, J., & Chapman, R. (1978). A pragmatic analysis of spontaneous imitations. *Journal of Child Language, 5,* 25-38.

Manolson, A. (1992). *It takes two to talk.* Toronto, ON: The Hanen Centre.

McCormick, L., & Schiefelbusch, R. L. (1990). *Early language intervention: An introduction.* Columbus, OH: Merrill.

Messer, D. (1980). The episodic structure of maternal speech to young children. *Journal of Child Language, 7,* 29-40.

Muma, J. R. (1986). *Language acquisition: A functionalistic perspective.* Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.

Ninio, A., & Bruner, J. (1978). The achievement of antecedents of labeling. *Journal of Child Language, 5,* 1-15.

Owens, R. E. (1984). *Language development: An introduction.* Columbus, OH: Merrill.

Piaget, J. (1952). *The origins of intelligence in children.* New York: International Universities Press.

Robinson, R. O. (1981). Plasticity and specificity of language localization in the developing brain. *Developmental Medicine and Child Neurology, 4,* 545-546.

Snow, C. E. (1984). *Parent-child interaction and the development of communicative competence* (pp. 69-108). Baltimore: University Park Press.

Protecting the Brain

Touring Our Environment

Elizabeth Barry Connelly, RN, OCN,
Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center,
New Hampshire

Most caregivers know that accidents are the major cause of death and injury in young children older than 1. Head trauma from falls accounts for much of the injuries and deaths—approximately 110,000 children are hospitalized annually in the United States due to injuries to the head and neck. Protecting young children's heads from accidents is part of providing quality care, because an injury to the head could affect the child's brain and cause long-term mental or physical disabilities.

At birth the brain contains approximately 100 billion neurons, or nerve cells, which make up our complex thinking capabilities. This network of neurons is very intricate and delicate. Therefore, it is essential that we help to protect the brain from any injury, including chemical consumption. The following are reminders for parents and child care providers when preparing a safe and stimulating environment for very young children:

1. Look carefully at the physical environment and conduct a tour of the setting to determine if a young child might hurt himself on a structure that could cause head injury, such as: tables, beds, unlocked windows or windows without window guards, walkers, and other objects. If possible, make sure to lock doors that lead to stairways, and to use securing straps on changing tables.

2. Car safety is critical to preventing head and neck injuries. Despite all the publicity about taking precautions when driving with a child, statistics still show that most head injuries occur in automobiles. Be sure to use a well-padded, firmly constructed infant or toddler car seat. The adult driver must follow the directions specific to the particular car seat, since the directions may vary from one model to the next. Young children should always be secured in the rear seat of the car.

Remember, no safety device can protect a child if it is not used, or if it is not used properly. Child care providers should keep on hand brochures and posters reminding busy parents of the importance of always using car seats.

3. Most poisoning accidents take place in the home and involve young children swallowing toxic substances such as paint, soaps, dyes, bleaches, detergents, and other solvents. These products can injure the brain and cause lasting physical harm. Many everyday household products contain chemicals that could be dangerous. Parents and caregivers can and should obtain information about potentially harmful products from their poison control center or pediatrician.

4. Because young children are naturally curious, any new object may be interesting to them. Even plastic bags can seem worthy of their exploration. Accidental suffocation can affect the brain and cause serious damage. Be sure to keep all plastic bags out of the reach of young children. Plastic bags in garbage cans, which are commonly found in child care settings, are a potential danger that many caregivers do not think about.

Parents need to know that their child's caregiver is constantly vigilant about inspecting the environment in order to protect the children from harm. It is helpful for parents to know that you are conducting these tours and working closely with your staff to remind them to consider any potentially hazardous environmental objects or substances. Child-proofing the environment should be part of our daily preparation in early childhood settings.

Parents need to know that their child's caregiver is constantly vigilant about inspecting the environment in order to protect the children from harm.

Call for Manuscripts

The readership of *Focus on Infants & Toddlers* is encouraged to submit ideas and manuscripts related to the care, education, development, and learning of infants and toddlers and their families. Editorial assistance is available if needed.

If you have any materials or suggestions to be considered, please contact the new Editors:

Virginia Barry
Patricia Cantor
Department of Education
Plymouth State College
Plymouth, NH 03264

Focus on Infants & Toddlers
Spring 2000, Vol. 12, No. 3

Executive Board
Shirley Raines, *President*; James L. Hoot, *Past President*; Eeva Hujala, *Vice President: Infancy/Early Childhood*; Maria "M.J." Savaiano, *Vice President: Intermediate/Middle Childhood*; Debora Basler Wisneski, *Secretary-Treasurer*; Karen C. Y. Liu, *Member-at-Large*; Julie Leahy, *Student Representative*; Gerald C. Odland, *Ex Officio Member*

Editors
Virginia M. Barry
and
Patricia Cantor
Plymouth State College
Plymouth, New Hampshire

Production Editor
Deborah Jordan Kravitz

Headquarters Staff
Gerald C. Odland, *Executive Director*
Anne Watson Bauer, *Editor/Director of Publications*
Marilyn Gardner, *Director of Membership/Marketing*
Patricia A. Monkres, *Director of Conferences*
Haochien Chen, *Accountant*

Copyright © 2000
Association for Childhood Education International
Olney, MD 20832

Association for Childhood Education International
17904 Georgia Ave., Ste. 215
Olney, Maryland 20832

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
SILVER SPRING, MD
PERMIT NO. 5395

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ACEI

Summer 2000 • Vol. 12, No. 4

Focus on Infants & Toddlers

ages 0-3

A Quarterly Newsletter for the Education Community

Theme

This issue features two articles that focus on the art of caring for young children. Judith Garrett highlights the benefits of establishing partnerships between child care providers and early intervention specialists. The prospect of working with young children with special needs can be intimidating to child care providers, who may feel that they do not have the right training for that role. As Garrett points out, "Although child care providers and early interventionists have many areas of knowledge and skill in common, they also bring specialized perspectives and competencies to their work with children and families. A partnership that values these perspectives and utilizes each individual's expertise can greatly enhance the services that are provided."

Edythe Margolin draws on her own experiences in working with infants and toddlers to identify some critical factors that must be kept in mind by those who work with very young children. Her article encourages caregivers to reflect on their practice, as an important step in ensuring that children receive high-quality care.

We are delighted that both of the articles in this issue were submitted by readers of this newsletter. Your ideas and manuscripts are very welcome. For information about submissions, see the back page.

—V.B. and P.C.

Child Care Providers: Important Partners in Early Intervention

Judith N. Garrett, Assistant Professor, Arizona State University West

Community-based early intervention services have received a lot of attention recently. Federal legislation now requires that services for infants and toddlers with disabilities be provided in natural environments, which are defined as settings where children without disabilities typically spend their time (Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, 1997).

The legislation reflects shifts in recommended practice for infants and toddlers with special needs. There is a growing belief that functional, relevant, and integrated goals and activities are the appropriate means of addressing the needs of very young children with disabilities (Bricker & Cripe, 1992; Coling & Garrett, 1995; DEC Task Force on Recommended Practices, 1993). This type of functional programming can be best implemented through the use of play-based strategies and daily routines. The importance of play in the development of young children is well recognized (Piaget, 1962; Smilansky & Shefatya, 1990; Vygotsky, 1967). During the past decade, interventionists have realized that play is also an appropriate vehicle for fostering development in, and providing intervention for, children with special needs (Coling & Garrett, 1995; Linder, 1993).

An area that has received somewhat less attention, but that constitutes an important milieu for the development of skills, is daily routines (Bricker & Cripe, 1992; Coling & Garrett, 1995). We know that children may not be able to generalize across settings the abilities they acquire in isolation; abilities acquired in isolation, therefore, have a limited capacity to improve the

ED U296624

child's real-world competence (Miller, 1989). Generalization increases, however, when children develop skills in natural environments and within the context of daily routines (Warren & Kaiser, 1986). Routines involved with eating, dressing, and handwashing provide multisensory experiences that allow children to develop and refine a variety of skills in the most functional way possible.

These shifts in recommended practice have resulted in different models for delivering intervention services. A model in which intervention is provided in community-based programs is replacing the traditional model of early intervention, in which children are exclusively served in specialized settings. Community-based child care centers certainly fit the definition of natural environments, because they are settings where many children spend a good deal of time. In addition, because of the variety of opportunities that child care centers offer in the areas of play, daily routines, and functional practice, these settings also qualify as viable intervention environments.

As the model of intervention changes, the roles of the individuals within these settings also change. Child care providers are more and more likely to provide care for infants and toddlers with disabilities, while early interventionists find themselves working as consultants, in addition to their direct service roles. This creates opportunities for innovative and exciting partnerships between child care providers and early interventionists as they work with families to create environments that support the development of infants and toddlers, including children with special needs.

One of the first steps in forming a partnership is to recognize and appreciate the special expertise of each partner. Although child care providers and early interventionists have many areas of knowledge and skill in common, they also bring specialized perspectives and competencies to their work with children and families. A partnership that values these perspectives and utilizes each individual's expertise can greatly enhance services.

There are five

Resources for Infant/Toddler Parents and Caregivers

"The ABCs of Safe and Healthy Child Care," a comprehensive guide for child care providers, is available online from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The handbook includes a wealth of information about a variety of important topics. The following list represents just some of the categories found at the site: common childhood illnesses, recommended health and safety policies for child care settings, nutrition, children with special needs, cleaning and disinfecting, food safety, staff health and safety, and stress reduction. This wonderful resource is located at www.cdc.gov/ncidod/hip/ABC/abc.htm.

One of our readers, Phyllis Porter of Bloomington, Minnesota, recently announced the launch of her Web page, "World of Infants," at www.educarer.com. Devoted to infant development and care, the site is designed to help educate parents, child care providers, and others who interact with infants. It includes links to a number of helpful Web sites.

A new publication from the U.S. Department of Education, "Building Your Baby's Brain: A Parent's Guide to the First Five Years," offers helpful information for parents of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, including activities to help children learn, as well as background on why these activities are important for brain development. The 43-page booklet, which emphasizes the importance of responsive, caring interactions, is available either in English or Spanish from the Department of Education. To order, call 1-877-4ED-PUBS. There is no charge.

Correction: In the Summer 1999 issue, we mentioned the book *Dear Parent: Caring for Infants With Respect*, by Magda Gerber. The publisher, Resources for Infant Educarers, is located in Los Angeles, California, not Hermosa Beach, as stated in the issue.

critical components of early intervention where this type of partnership can be particularly useful: observing and assessing development, formulating meaningful goals and outcomes, facilitating and supporting development, monitoring progress and generalization, and supporting families.

Observing and Assessing Development
Good assessment is the key to good planning. Child care providers have a solid understanding of typical child development and are in an excellent position to observe an infant's or toddler's abilities. Child care providers have opportunities to observe how the child explores and interacts with the environment, how the child interacts with other children and adults, and how the child functions in real-world situations. Infant/toddler teachers see the child over a period of hours, days, and weeks, so they have a good idea about the child's typical abilities. Interventionists are skilled in focusing on specific aspects of development, such as motor functioning or communication. They are able to isolate skills and abilities in an attempt to understand quality and utility. By combining their areas of expertise, the child care provider and the interventionist can work with the family to develop an accurate and comprehensive picture of the child's developmental functioning. This, in turn, will lead to the formulation of appropriate goals.

Formulating Meaningful Goals
Child care providers are experts in the area of developmental ecology. Like the family, they have a great deal of knowledge about the skills that a child must possess to function adequately and appropriately in real-world environments. This knowledge is critical to the development of meaningful and functional goals. The early interventionist brings specialized knowledge of how to break down goals or outcomes into smaller pieces, and to sequence these pieces in a way that facilitates development. When we integrate the knowledge of the child care provider with that of the early interventionist, we are much more likely to develop a plan that is practical, realistic, and achievable.

Facilitating and Supporting Development
This is an area of intervention where the competencies of the infant/toddler teacher and the early

Photos courtesy of Just Kids Learning Center

interventionist really complement one another. Child care providers are experts in developmentally appropriate practices, and are skilled at supporting development through exploration and play. They are aware of the many factors that contribute to a child's healthy emotional development. Early interventionists have expertise in specialized techniques that promote skill acquisition. In addition, they are experienced in modifying and adapting activities and the environment to provide the support children need to access, explore, and interact with their world. By working together, child care providers and early interventionists can create a nurturing environment that is engaging, enjoyable, and effective in helping children grow and learn.

Monitoring Progress and Generalization
Monitoring progress is an important aspect of implementing any plan, and many of the competencies associated with observation and assessment are pertinent to this aspect of intervention as well. The early interventionist's ability to identify and isolate specific behaviors is vital in monitoring acquisition of individual skills. The child care provider, on the other hand, is in the perfect

position to monitor the generalization and functionality of skills through observation of the child in play and daily routines.

Supporting Families

Both child care providers and early interventionists recognize the crucial role that families play in the lives of young children. There are a number of ways that infant/toddler teachers and interventionists can collaborate with families to enhance the development of infants and toddlers with special needs. The child care provider's knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices can help parents identify opportunities for family play and guide the selection of toys and materials that foster development and learning. The early interventionist can provide strategies for adapting toys, activities, and daily routines to maximize the child's developmental potential in the home environment. In addition, the child care provider can offer the family suggestions on ways to support the social and emotional development of their child, while the interventionist's knowledge of the effects of disabilities on family functioning may be useful in helping families meet the needs of all family members.

The movement toward the provision of services in natural environments has created opportunities for partnerships between child care providers and early interventionists. When we capitalize on these opportunities, we move closer to fulfilling the promise of natural environments—the promise that infants and toddlers with special needs will be able to grow, develop, and learn within their communities and in the company of their same-age peers.

References

Bricker, D., & Cripe, J. (1992). *An activity-based approach to early intervention.* Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

Coling, M. C., & Garrett, J. N. (1995). *Activity-based intervention guide.* Tucson, AZ: Therapy Skill Builders.

DEC Task Force on Recommended Practices. (1993). *DEC recommended practices: Indicators of quality in programs for infants and young children with special needs and their families.* Reston, VA: The Council for Exceptional Children.

Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Amendments of 1997. (1997). *Public Law 105-17, 20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq.*

Linder, T. W. (1993). *Transdisciplinary play-based intervention: Guidelines for developing a meaningful curriculum for young children.* Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

Miller, L. (1989). Classroom based language intervention. *Language Speech and Hearing Services in the Schools, 20,* 153-169.

Piaget, J. (1962). *Play, dreams and imitation in childhood.* New York: W.W. Norton.

Smilansky, S., & Shefatya, L. (1990). *Facilitating play: A medium for promoting cognitive, socio-emotional, and academic development in young children.* Gaithersburg, MD: Psychosocial and Educational Publications.

Vygotsky, L. (1967). Play and its role in the mental development of the child. *Soviet Psychology, 12,* 62-76.

Warren, S., & Kaiser, A. (1986). Incidental language teaching: A critical review. *Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders, 51,* 291-299.

Crucial Factors in Working With Young Childen

Edythe Margolin, Professor,
California State University, Northridge

My experiences in studying child development and working with young children suggests that there are several important issues to keep in mind for enhancing children's well-being. These are some of the crucial factors that we should consider when working with young children:

Interactions. We need to be aware of how we interact with children. How do we talk with young children? How do we direct their behavior? How do we encourage self-expression, while simultaneously seeing to it that a child's desire to express him- or herself does not encroach on the safety or space of another individual?

Materials. It is important to focus on the appropriateness of the materials in the child's environment. What kinds of materials and equipment encourage a child's learning? How do we know when children are sufficiently challenged by what we have provided in their environment? How do we know the optimum number of items we should have in the environment? How do children learn to share so that they do not feel that they are being punished, but rather are learning about "fair play"?

Cleanliness. What are the criteria for determining the cleanliness of the child's environment and of the children themselves? What about fingerpainting and easel painting? What should parents be told about ways of dressing children for child care activities? Can children be taught how to clean themselves, as well as their work and play areas? Of course, the child's ability to keep him- or herself clean will depend on the age of the toddler and the degree to which assistance is needed. But this is an issue that needs each teacher's attention. Some people new to the field seem to expect children to know or to have already been taught how to care for themselves and their environment. These kinds of inappropriate expectations can lead to resentment.

How do we know when children are sufficiently challenged by what we have provided in their environment?

Self-awareness. Teachers need to be aware of their own habits and preferences, as well as the things that irritate and annoy them. Teachers need to realize that their own backgrounds may not have taught them how to work with children whose experiences differ from their own. As teachers, we can benefit from learning new patterns of behavior, so that we can change how well we interact with others, if need be. For example, child-rearing patterns or beliefs that have been passed down in our family for generations may not be appropriate or of much help to us today. We need to learn how to adapt to new patterns of thinking and to benefit from new learning.

Working with parents. Children and parents come as a complete package, for the most part. An exception might be when adults other than parents are responsible for the child's development. We will be working with chil-

dren whose parents' or guardians' values may differ greatly from our own. The celebration of holidays is one area where misunderstandings or disagreements are common. Parents have the right to their own beliefs and a right to expect that teachers will respect those views. Teachers should recognize that sensitive, respectful, frequent, and open communication with parents is critical in forging a productive relationship.

Knowledge of the community. A teacher who cares about the well-being and growth of young children should be at least somewhat knowledgeable about the community in which the children live. Children are greatly affected by what they see, hear, and experience every day in their communities. Teachers should try to keep up with some of the major events in a child's life. Neighborhoods are an intricate part of the lives of children and their families, influencing their values and expectations. From a sociological point of view, educators should recognize the influence of the community in a child's everyday life (Hay, Castle, Stimson, & Davies, 1999).

Hopefulness. Those of us who work with young children should focus on helping them develop the spirit or attitude of hopefulness (Gardner, 1993, 1999; Seligman, 1990, 1995). Some children may have received the impression from parents or siblings that they are incompetent or incapable of performing various tasks. These feelings can become a foundation for hopelessness. Teachers and parents need to recognize that their own behavior may be influencing children's self-worth. By encouraging persistence in learning and helping children achieve success, adults can do much to help children develop a hopeful attitude.

Self-expression. Children need opportunities to express themselves. They enjoy opportunities to paint, draw, scribble, use colors, sing, listen to music, and move to music. They love imagining how it feels to be a tiger or a high-stepping horse. A teacher who knows how to encourage participation in the arts can entice even shy and uncertain children to become involved. Many helpful books are available to give teachers ideas for materials and experiences related to art, music, drama, movement, and dance.

The natural world. Toddlers are very interested in learning more about the world around them. They love digging in the soil, planting seeds, and watching flowers and vegetables grow. They are ready to help care for a class pet. (Be sure the pet is one that is safe to have around very young children.) Young children are budding scientist and explorers. We can capitalize on their interest by incorporating science into the toddler curriculum through experiences with the natural world, either by bringing children outdoors or by bringing elements of the outdoors inside.

Safety and health. Teachers of young children must be vigilant about protecting and promoting children's health and safety. Young children can learn which obstacles to avoid. They can be cautioned about washing their hands to prevent getting colds and passing germs on to one another. Children are able to understand self-protection and self-care when this information is presented to them in language they can understand.

These are only some of the crucial factors involved in working with young children. Each of these factors has several sub-categories that could be examined further. Research has been done, at various levels, on all of them. Professionals who are willing to take advantage of such information can enrich their own knowledge, as well as achieve greater satisfaction in discovering answers that have so far eluded us. We are aware that what we think is true today can change tomorrow. For this reason, we must keep an open mind, listen, read, observe children, and continue to be aware of new ideas. What is most important is that we care about young children, who will bring vigor to the society they have inherited from us.

References

Gardner, H. (1993). *Multiple intelligences.* New York: Basic Books.

Gardner, H. (1999). *Intelligence reframed.* New York: Basic Books.

Hay, D. F., Castle, J., Stimson, C. A., & Davies, L. (1999). The social construction of character in toddlerhood. In M. Killen and D. Hart (Eds.), *Morality in everyday life* (pp. 23-51). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Seligman, M. E. P. (1990). *Learned optimism.* New York: Knopf.

Seligman, M. E. P. (1995). *The optimistic child.* New York: Houghton Mifflin.

From the Vice President

education systems in Finland and New Zealand

ACEI educators have excellent opportunities to become familiar with, and to assess, education systems from around the world. We all have much to learn from each other. Recently, my graduate students and I sent an E-mail survey to all ACEI country presidents. We were interested in knowing the guidelines that different countries use in their early childhood programs. The purpose of my research is to gain knowledge of national guidelines of early childhood education, and to compare those guidelines with those used in the United States (such as the NAEYC guidelines).

At the moment I am on sabbatical in New Zealand, which is giving me an excellent opportunity to compare this country's system with Finland's education policy. I am very impressed by how much diversity is appreciated in New Zealand, and also by how appreciated children and services for children are. Professionals from diverse settings have helped develop the new curriculum for early childhood services. The government has made early childhood education a top priority, which is illustrated by an increase in funding for early childhood services by 92 percent over the past decade! Currently, the government is focusing on raising standards and quality. New Zealand has a fairly new quality improvement system that involves management, educators, and parents evaluating early childhood services.

After getting more and more familiar with this system, I see the Finnish education system in a new light. I see its strengths and weaknesses more clearly. I am proud of the early childhood system in Finland. It is affordable and available for all children before they begin compulsory school. I am also proud of the level of teacher training. In Finland, only trained teachers are allowed to teach young children. Also, I am proud that education is free from the primary through university levels.

But I am not proud of minimal regulation and minimal guidance, in everything from curriculum issues to administration of the system. In Finland, private enterprise is more and more "in fashion," and it makes it easier for money to influence the education system. In New Zealand, I appreciate how the government takes responsibility for the children in their country. I hope that we will get new members to ACEI from New Zealand to share with us their experiences in policy development. Through interaction with other societies, ACEI members will have a better basis from which to support each other, as well as to develop our own systems.

—Eeva Hujala, Vice President
Representing Infancy/Early Childhood

Call for Manuscripts

The readership of *Focus on Infants & Toddlers* is encouraged to submit ideas and manuscripts related to the care, education, development, and learning of infants and toddlers and their families. Editorial assistance is available if needed.

If you have any materials or suggestions to be considered, please contact the new Editors:

Virginia Barry
Patricia Cantor
Department of Education
Plymouth State College
Plymouth, NH 03264

Focus on Infants & Toddlers
Summer 2000, Vol. 12, No. 4

Executive Board
Shirley Raines, *President;* Nancy L. Quisenberry, *President-Elect;* Eeva Hujala, *Vice President: Infancy/Early Childhood;* Jeanie Burnett, *Vice President: Intermediate/Middle Childhood;* Debora Basler Wisneski, *Secretary-Treasurer;* Karen C. Y. Liu, *Member-at-Large;* Judit Szente, *Student Representative;* Gerald C. Odland, *Ex Officio Member*

Editors
Virginia M. Barry
and
Patricia Cantor
Plymouth State College
Plymouth, New Hampshire

Production Editor
Deborah Jordan Kravitz

Headquarters Staff
Gerald C. Odland, *Executive Director*
Anne Watson Bauer, *Editor/Director of Publications*
Marilyn Gardner, *Director of Membership/Marketing*
Patricia A. Monkres, *Director of Conferences*

Copyright © 2000
Association for Childhood Education International
Olney, MD 20832

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Association for Childhood Education International
17904 Georgia Ave., Ste. 215
Olney, Maryland 20832

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
SILVER SPRING, MD
PERMIT NO. 5395